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DR. HENRY'S ORATION.



PATRIOTISM

AND THE

SLAVEHOLDERS' REBELLION.



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An Oration.

By C. S. HENRY



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TO

THE HON. HAMILTON FISH.

MY DEAR SIR:

The following discourse was delivered some weeks ago, on the anniversary of an Academic Association; and more recently (except the introductory pages) on another occasion. You and other gentlemen who heard it have thought its circulation may do good.

I inscribe it to you, because it is chiefly owing to you that it is published, and also because I am glad of an opportunity of testifying to the respect and regard which your character and public life have gained from all honest men and true patriots.

Very truly and heartily yours,

C. S. HENRY.

NEWBURGH, *Sept.* 28, 1861

ORATION.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION:

WE have come here to-day to shake hands with each other as brothers, to look at our Fair Mother's face, to pay her our filial duty, to consult for her honor and her good. But who would have thought, at our last meeting, three years ago, that before the next our country would be plunged in a Civil War—a war waged by parricidal hands for the overthrow of the Constitution, the destruction of our national existence, and the extinction of the dearest hopes of the human race. But such is the fact; and all along the different roads by which we have come to these academic seats,—at every town and village through which we have passed, every hamlet, nook and station house, we have met with sights and sounds to remind us of the fact. The tokens of it are around us here to-day—in the flags and colors of the Union hung round these walls. It is the fact that is uppermost in all minds and on all tongues when men meet together. I cannot if I would (nor do I think you would have me if I could) ignore this fact on this

occasion of our meeting as brothers trained and nurtured here. I should contradict my own impulses, and I think I should fail of your sympathy, if I should propose to make our meeting one of mere literary recreation, and aim at nothing more than to contribute to the elegant entertainment of the hour. This is no time

“To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or play with the tangles of Nerea's hair.”

Inter arma silent leges—the din of arms drowns even the sacred voice of law, much more the notes of Arcadian pipes breathing festive strains and the song of shepherd's love: the harp of the muses, to be heard, must be swept to martial strains, such as of old Tyrtæus poured forth—the war song and the battle march—inspiring heroic Spartans to fight and die for the defence of their *Eunomia*, the “good constitution” of their native land. I cannot strike such strains. Mine is not the tuneful power to sing either of peace or of war. But I shall attempt in plain prose to speak of some things which the times suggest to us as scholars, as thinkers, as representatives of the liberal culture of the nation, who as such have duties in regard to the education of the national mind; and among these things first of this: the importance for our country of what I may call a patriotic education; by which I mean the direction of all the influences which go to mould the character of the young—school instruction and all other forming influences—to the cultivation of the spirit of nationality, loyalty, love of country, unselfish devotion to the public good—in a word, patriotism.

Patriotism has its root among the elementary affections, in the social sympathies of our nature. It is a sentiment—something in the heart, not resting in calculations of private advantage, nor deduced from abstract regards of any sort, but springing up of itself in every generous and unperturbed soul. It is a sympathy, which, twined with a thousand associations, makes a man feel that his individual life is bound up with his country's life, its whole life, past, present, and future. As between a man and his country it is what religion is between a man and his God, what the parental and filial affections are between parents and children—a bond of union; and like all the noble and true human affections, it is disinterested, it is a bond that cannot be wrought and twined out of any considerations of self-interest, nor even of public utility. It is fraught indeed with all manner of beautiful and benignant utilities, indispensable to the safety and defence, the highest welfare and noblest life of a nation; just as the home affections are fruitful of blessings to those who are connected by the ties of home; but in neither case are you to look for the origin of the affections in the utilities that flow from them. This is preposterous—putting the wrong thing foremost. The form and beauty, the flower and fruit of the tree spring from the root, not the root from them. There must be first the love or else not the advantages of love; and love of country, like all other love, must be a pure unselfish sentiment, or it is not love, and cannot bear the fruits of love.

Nor can patriotism, as a sentiment, be construed as a mere sense of duty, any more than it can be resolved

into self-interest or regards of general advantage. It may, like all the better sentiments of our nature, enter into the sphere of reason and conscience, be taken into union with the sense of duty, giving to it warmth, and deriving from it exaltation and support: the sense of duty being made more living by love, and the love made more firm by the imperial voice of duty. This is so with all duties: love is a living energy that animates the doing of them, helps the better to do them, makes it pleasant to do them. It is a cold, hard, dreary thing to do the duties of love without the heart of love. It is our duty to give our life, if need be, for the defence of our country, to give our life for the life and welfare of unborn generations; but how much easier the duty, and more surely done, if the heart be in the conscience and in the will,—if, besides the sense of duty, there be a love stronger than death! Out of this only comes it that we can say and feel its truth:

Dulce et decorum pro patria mori.

Nothing but love can make it a sweet and beautiful thing to die for others. Out of this only come the heroisms that make the glory of history and attest the nobleness of which human nature, by God's inspiration, is capable. Of which take the case of that Frenchman, the Chevalier D'Assas, colonel of the regiment of Auvergne, commanding the outpost of the French army at Klosterkamp near Gueldres, during the *Seven Years' War*—who, going the rounds of the posts in the gray of the morning of Oct. 15, 1760, fell in with a division of the enemy that had been advancing under cover of the night, and was just ready to fall on the slumbering

French. He was immediately seized and threatened with instant death if he uttered a cry of alarm. To be silent was the destruction of the French army. Without a moment's hesitation, summoning all his strength, he shouted out: "*Au moi, Auvergne!*" "Hither Auvergne, the enemy's at hand!" and the next moment fell dead, pierced through the heart by the weapons pointed at his breast. But he gained his object. The warning was timely, and the attack was repulsed.

Such is the noble spontaneousness of patriotic love. And if I have dwelt upon this point somewhat at length, it is because it is upon the depth and strength of this sentiment, pervading the heart of a people, that the true prosperity and highest welfare of a nation always, and the very salvation of its freedom and national existence sometimes, depend. It prompts to deeds and services and sacrifices and sufferings which the impulses of self-interest not only never prompt to, but oppose, and which the clearest convictions of duty cannot, through the weakness of the human will, always make sure. Nothing but love can overcome the impulses of selfishness, or always make the will strong to obey the voice of duty.

The true patriotic spirit, I need hardly say, is heaven-wide from that mere national conceit, vain-gloriousness and pride, which is nothing but national egotism—which may be intense indeed, as among the old Greeks and Romans, but is, at the same time, illiberal and exclusive, and the more intense, the more illiberal and exclusive—making the word stranger synonymous with enemy, and impairing the sense of justice towards other nations. On the contrary, true patriot-

ism is that noble sentiment of nationality, loyalty, and unselfish devotion to the good of one's own country, which is perfectly compatible not only with justice but with hearty good will towards other nations, and with the largest feeling of the universal brotherhood of the human race.

But patriotism, like every other generous sentiment of our nature, needs cultivation. And to whom does it eminently belong to feed the sacred fire, and to keep it alive and glowing, pure and bright in the great heart of the nation? To whom, but to the educated class, whose superior culture makes them, of right and of duty, the "shepherds of the people."

The people of this country should be *brought up* to be patriots. This should be one of the ends aimed at in the training of the young, from childhood upwards. It should be one of the objects kept in view in all school instruction throughout the country. It should enter especially into our system of higher instruction. For what end are our colleges and universities? For intellectual training, liberal learning, and refined culture—we say. Undoubtedly they are for this—but not merely for this: for this in itself is an end without an end. The true end and worthy purpose of all training and culture, all knowledge and accomplishment, is to fit men for life and its duties, and especially for those good offices which society has a right to expect from those who have the best intellectual training and the highest culture. A certain number of them may indeed, in the still air of secluded studies, devote themselves mainly to the advancement of science and knowledge, to specula-

tion, discovery, invention, and production in the intellectual sphere. But the calling of the great majority of them is *practical*—the magnanimous discharge of those public duties on which the maintenance and well-being of the commonwealth depend, and the exercise of that influence which rightfully belongs to them as guides and leaders of the people, forming and directing public opinion and the practical action of their countrymen.

To fulfil this high calling to the honor and advantage of their country, something more than a mere classical, mathematical, and logical education, something more than mere intellectual training and culture, is necessary: moral training, moral culture is indispensable. This our colleges should supply. It ought to be a fact put beyond question, that the youth of the nation nurtured in them, are brought under influences which make it reasonably certain that they will be imbued with sound moral principles, that the seeds of magnanimity and public virtue will be planted in their minds. It ought to be a well understood and undoubted thing that in all these institutions sound instruction in morals generally, and in political ethics and the constitutional principles of our Government in particular, is dispensed by the most competent men that can be found. The office of giving it—as it is of the very highest importance—so it should be considered one of the most dignified and honorable in the land. It is a trust that should be confided only to men of the highest order of mind and the largest possible measure of that enthusiasm, force of character, and peculiar gift of influence over other minds, which go to make the great true teacher—

one who vivifies what he expounds, making it enter, not as dry dead formulas, but as a life and living power into the minds of the young, and so forms them into true and worthy men, of magnanimous spirit, fit for all the duties which God and their country may call them to, when they go from the schools into life and the world.

This earnest cultivation of the patriotic spirit is for us the more indispensable both from the absence of certain favorable conditions, and the working of certain causes that are positively unfavorable to its growth.

In the first place, our population is not homogeneous. It is made up from different nations. There is not as yet one universal mother tongue for all the people of the land. We have indeed a common national language, but that is not exclusively ours: it is the English tongue.

Then, again, we have no proper national name. We cannot call ourselves Americans in any distinguishing way; for the Canadians, the Mexicans, the Brazilians are equally Americans—though they all have what we have not, a distinguishing name for their respective countries. We sometimes call our country Columbia. That is only poetical usage; but it shows the instinctive feeling of the want of a distinguishing national name. Our official designation is the United States of America. It is a great pity we have not a better one. It distracts and perplexes the idea of national oneness. It fosters the notion of independent separateness which is the very thing the people intended to destroy, when they abrogated the old Articles of Confederation and

established the new Constitution. It is a pity they did not then fix upon some single national name—Columbia, Alleghania, or whatever other might have been thought appropriate.

We are indeed one nation in the theory of the Constitution. This is put beyond all doubt by the instrument itself—by its preamble, by its provisions expressly vesting in the Union, and prohibiting to the States as such, every attribute and function of sovereignty, and by its palmary declaration of the supremacy of the Constitution and laws of the Union over all State constitutions and laws. But the very name—Constitution of the United States—suggests feelings which sometimes make an argument from its terms needful; whereas if the style of it had been the Constitution of the people of Columbia, the name itself would have always presented us to ourselves and to the world as a nation one and indivisible—would have carried home to the feelings what the language of the instrument makes clear to the understanding. It would have gone far to prevent, if not rather effectually to preclude those notions of State rights and State sovereignty in which the doctrine of secession now finds its pretext—Rome was always and everywhere Rome—Rome when she was founded on the seven hills—Rome when she absorbed the states of Italy—Rome when she had annexed the world—and made the word *Roman citizen* a word of pride in the lips of all that could pronounce it wherever they might go. Such things are not without importance. A word, a name, often exerts a powerful influence on the education of a people; and it is certain that the sense of national oneness and the sentiment of

loyalty and love of country are fostered by a common origin, a common language, and a national name.

Now as to what is positively bad in its effects. It is not to be denied that in the actual working of our political system—and especially in the business of quadrennial President-making, with its hot contests of rival parties and stupendous scramble for offices and jobs, there are influences constantly operating on the whole mass of the people which tend more powerfully to demoralize the nation than any that can be found in the working of any other political system on the globe. I say this advisedly as to every word I use, because I believe it is undeniably true, and because it is equally undeniable that whatever goes to corrupt the morals of a nation goes to corrupt the sources of its patriotism.

But Slavery—I trust I may be permitted to refer to this subject without violating that propriety which, on occasions like this, forbids the introduction of topics on which radical differences of opinion and feeling may be presumed to exist. May I not take it for granted that *to-day* I run no risk of giving offence by saying what the line of thought I am pursuing leads me to say on the influence of Slavery on patriotism? I shall venture so to presume, and therefore frankly express my own thoughts—Slavery, I say, then, more than any thing else, has debauched the moral sense of the people of the Southern States and corrupted the springs of loyal patriotic national feeling there—not without mischievous effect too, to a considerable extent, upon the Northern mind. Look how it has worked.

The fathers of the republic, South as well as North,

thought it a curse and a shame; their Southern sons hold it for a blessing and a glory;

The fathers regarded it as repugnant to the principles of natural justice, and did not dream of defending it on that ground; their sons uphold it as sanctioned by God and the Gospel;

The fathers hoped it would be gradually restricted and ultimately extinguished; their sons are resolved to perpetuate and extend it, and are now in arms for the overthrow of the Union and the establishment of a great slave empire that shall ultimately embrace all Mexico and Central America.

What a prodigious change of sentiment is this! And in how comparatively short a period it has been wrought.—The time is not so far back as not to be within the memory of many of you, when John Randolph spoke only the general feeling of the most enlightened Southern men, in his reply to that Northern member of Congress who had meanly thought to curry Southern favor by expressing his approbation of slavery: “Mr. Speaker,” said he, extending his long arm and pointing his long skinny finger at the cowering “*doughface*”—his shrill voice and sallow face full of the intensest scorn—“Mr. Speaker, I envy neither the head, nor the heart of the Northern man who rises here to defend slavery on principle.” The doughface shrunk into himself abashed at the withering rebuke. But Mr. Randolph, I say, spoke only the general feeling of respectable Southern men at that time. It is not quite thirty years ago since slavery was denounced as an economical, social, and moral evil by the leading men of Virginia, and its abolition earnestly urged, and almost carried in the

Convention of that State—only one vote more being needed, I believe, to carry it.

What has wrought this great change of opinion? Mercenary considerations—suddenly enhanced profits on cotton-growing in the Lower Slave states, and a corresponding sudden enhancement of profits on slave-breeding in the Upper ones. Here began the change of moral opinion on slavery which we have seen. Men always try to find moral and religious grounds to justify what selfish interests determine them to do, and will bend and force the Word of God Himself into sanctioning what the spontaneous dictates of reason and conscience pronounce to be contrary to the plainest principles of natural right: just as if such a procedure (supposing their interpretation correct) could have any other legitimate effect than to destroy the claims of any pretended Divine revelation.—Show me a revelation that contradicts the necessary convictions of reason and conscience—and I reject it. Show me a revelation that says the mere right of the strongest is, in itself, a moral right—a revelation that says that difference of color, of race, of intellectual endowment and capacity for civilization and self-elevation, is God's sanction for the stronger race to drag the weaker from their native seats and make them tools and chattels—and I reject it as quickly as I would a pretended revelation that should declare two and two to be eight, or that the three angles of a triangle are not equal to two right angles. The Southern Gospel puts God in contradiction with himself. I thank God for the conviction I have that it is a false Gospel. The Gospel of Christ does indeed tell us that not all wrongs are to be redressed in any way, no matter

what the consequences—it is not, in my opinion, a *Garrisonian* Abolitionist Gospel. It does indeed preach the duties that may mutually pertain to the parties to a false abnormal relation while that relation exists. It does indeed preach submission, patience, endurance under many a wrong, and the spirit of justice and charity under all wrongs. But it never preaches that therefore wrong is right: yet this is the preaching that has been going on for thirty years at the South, every year more and more boldly proclaimed—until the moral sense of the present generation there is completely debauched.

Nor has the debauching influence been confined to the South. Through the interests of party politics and the immense commercial interests the growth of slavery has created, it has spread quite considerably at the North; and within the last half dozen years, especially, we have heard the Southern Gospel zealously proclaimed among us—in pulpits, on platforms, and by the press—in sermons, speeches, and articles—by editors, political haranguers and divines, in a fashion that a man would have been thought crazy to have predicted thirty years ago, or twenty years ago.—I think this sort of preaching is at an end here now. I do not believe we shall have much more of it at the North. I think we are all now pretty well agreed as to the influence of slavery on the character of a people—what sort of chivalry, honor and honesty, for instance, it produces. We shall need have a new dictionary to define the Southern meaning of the words: the *chivalry* that drives harmless women from their homes and confiscates the petticoats left behind in the hurried flight; the *honor* that makes army and navy officers hold their places and

draw their pay as long as they can by secret treachery injure the Government, for whose defence they were nurtured and sworn and honored and trusted and paid, and then go over openly to war against it; the *honesty* that steals and robs under trust and glories in the robbery and theft.—It is a pretty good commentary on the tone of moral sentiment engendered by slavery, when Floyd and Cobb and Twiggs and Lee and men of that stamp are held in respect and crowned with applause.

I presume, too, we have all arrived at a pretty clear conviction as to the quality of patriotism fostered by slavery, and need no more instruction to convince us that slave-holding institutions are as perfectly compatible with a real love for republican freedom and a true loyalty to a republican government like ours, as the worship of God and Mammon.—There can indeed be no true loyalty, no genuine reverence for law, where all men have not equal rights—I do not speak of political rights but equal personal rights—before the law. It is supplanted by the barbarous law of wilfulness and brute violence. There can be no true freedom even for the free,—no security for the dearest rights of freemen,—freedom of the press, freedom of suffrage, freedom of speech, freedom of thought. Slave-holding institutions are hostile to them all. Their spirit is essentially a spirit of oligarchic tyranny. Its tendency is inevitably to despotism and a military rule. This all philosophy and all history teach. But we have been slow to learn the lesson.

Seventy-two years ago, William Pinkney, the great statesman and orator of Maryland, thus warned the people: “That the dangerous consequences of the system

of bondage," said he, "have not yet been felt does not prove that they never will be. . . . To me nothing for which I have not the evidence of my senses is more clear than that *it will one day destroy that reverence for liberty which is the vital principle of a republic*. While a majority of your citizens are accustomed to rule with the authority of despots within particular limits, while your youth are reared in the habit of thinking that the great rights of human nature are not so sacred but they may with innocence be trampled on, can it be expected that the public mind should glow with that generous ardor in the cause of freedom which can alone save a government like ours from the *lurking demon of usurpation*? . . . For my own part, I have no hope that the stream of general liberty will flow forever unpolluted through the mire of partial bondage, or that they who have been habituated to lord it over others will not in time be base enough to let others lord it over them. If they resist it will be the struggle of pride and selfishness, not of principle."*—So spoke William Pinkney seventy-two years ago. The wisdom of the warning, the truth of the prediction, we see in the events we are in the midst of now.

The revolt of the Southern States has been accomplished by a band of conspirators possessing themselves of arms and of the machinery of State action. It was precipitated by trickery and fraud, by despotism and terror—in some cases, without even the show of submit-

* "I am indebted for this passage from Mr. Pinkney's speech to the noble and admirable Address of Mr. JOHN JAY, delivered at Mount Cisco, New York, on the Fourth of July last, on "The Great Conspiracy and England's Neutrality."

ting the question to the suffrages of the people, and in no case with a free, fair, full expression of the popular mind by ballot or by voice. The insurrectionary government organized by the conspirators, is nothing more than a *usurpation*, such as Mr. Pinkney foretold; and in spite of its republican forms, it is really nothing at bottom but a military *despotism*, to which the Southern people, willingly or unwillingly, are forced to submit.

Let us clearly understand the nature of this war. It is not a war, on the part of the insurgents, merely for the establishment of the doctrine of secession, or for the conquest of a separate independent government; nor on our part, merely for the overthrow of that doctrine, or for the preservation of the integrity of the national domain. These are both indeed issues that are to be decided by it. But it has a far deeper significance—a significance that invests it with a solemn historical importance not surpassed by that of any war ever waged since modern civilization began its march over the world.

It is at bottom a war between two antagonistic and irreconcilable systems of social order—the one founded on the old Declaration of Independence of 1776, the other on the denial of it. When that Declaration proclaimed that “all men are born free and equal”—are freemen, that is, by birthright, and entitled to equal rights before the law—not meaning thereby *political* rights, for these are not *natural* but prescriptive rights, but equal *personal* rights before the law; that is, equal right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”—when, I say, that Declaration proclaimed this, it proclaimed a doctrine incompatible with any defence of slavery on principle. So the

fathers of the Republic, South as well as North, understood it then. So the Southern insurgents understand it now. The fathers did not justify slavery as right in principle; but only excused it as an evil entailed upon them to be provisionally tolerated, and to be got rid of as soon as it could be well and wisely done: the Southern insurgents justify it as right in principle, and so they are driven by a strict logical necessity to contradict the doctrine of the Declaration of Independence. Mr. Stephens, the Vice-President of the insurgent confederacy, says it is a "pestilent heresy." He does not, like many others, stupidly mistake or wilfully pervert its meaning in order to deride it. He does not even call it (as Mr. Choate did) a "glittering generality." He knows better. He knows that it is a sufficiently clear enunciation of a very intelligible doctrine—which may be denied as false, but cannot be derided as absurd. He therefore confronts it with a denial, and proposes to build up a new order of things on the contradiction of it: "The foundations of our new government," he says, "are laid, *its corner-stone rests*, in the great truth," that slavery is the natural and moral condition of the Negro race. "This, our new government," he adds, "is the first in the world based on this great, physical, philosophical, and moral truth;" and, "with a government so founded," he declares "that the world would recognize in theirs the model nation of history."

This is a war, then, for the overthrow of the old Declaration of Independence. That is its inmost meaning. It is a war that sooner or later was sure to come. The recognition of slavery in the Constitution of the Union—indirect as it was—and little as I am now dis-

posed to condemn the motives of its framers at that day—was still at variance with the Declaration of Independence. No theoretical inconsistency but some day works practical mischief. You cannot introduce contradictory elements into the bosom of any social organization without inaugurating an “irrepressible conflict.” There is a logic of history that cannot be resisted. What has come to pass was inevitable.

The two systems of social order, co-existing under one government, have gone on developing—the one in the North, the other in the South—until, on the one side, you see a society of twenty millions of people, every one with equal rights of person and property in the eye of law, every one equally protected in “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;” and on the other side, a society of ten millions, more than four millions of whom are legally held as property, bought and sold, as cattle, sheep, or any other property are bought and sold, their persons, and faculties of body and mind, controlled by their owners at their will, and for their ends.

And now these two systems are face to face with each other, in open, deadly war.

I said it was inevitably sure to come. Not that it need ever have come—so far as the North is concerned—if the South had been content with its constitutional pound (and it has had a great deal more than its constitutional pound) of slavery flesh. At the North, experiencing none of the evils that work inevitably in the bosom of a slaveholding society, and deriving from the Union many advantages, the great body of the people have been always, practically, not only contented to

leave the South in the undisturbed enjoyment of its peculiar institution and of those constitutional advantages in which it had, in many respects, much the best of the bargain; but more than contented—they have been always making concession after concession to its imperious demands, stretching the Constitution to the utmost, if not breaking it, in favor of slavery, and certainly (as every statesman knows) going *over* it and *beyond* it in allowing the whole power of the Union to help aggrandize it in extent and in political importance, by the purchase or conquest of immense territories to be brought in as new slave States.

But the South has not been content with its original bargain, nor with all it has gained besides. It is not in the nature of the slaveholding power to be contented in the Union without controlling it. Its spirit is essentially aggressive. It brooks no superior. It demands submission from every thing with which it has to do.—This is why I said this war was inevitably sure to come. This is why it has come.

Thirty years ago, the leading spirits at the South took the determination to get possession of the political power of the nation, through the help of whatever Northern votes they could bring to their side, and to control it for the aggrandizement and extension of slavery, and to break up the Union whenever that possession and control should pass from their hands.—Then began that systematic sowing of the seeds of disloyalty to the Union, and that systematic perversion of the sentiment of allegiance among all classes, and especially among the officers of the army and navy, which has lately displayed itself in treacheries and treasons such

as the history of the world shows nothing equal to for dishonor and baseness.

From that day onward the Southern leaders have kept their clear persistent purpose. Gaining the political control of the Union, they wielded it for their own ends. The acquisition of Texas, the war with Mexico, the Fugitive Slave Law, the repeal of the Missouri compromise, and the Dred Scott decision, all these were accomplished in their interest. They failed indeed in the attempt to force slavery into Kansas; but they had all the power and influence of the Administration on their side. The attempt was an atrocious crime; but it was also what Talleyrand said is a great deal worse than a crime, it was an enormous political blunder. It awoke a spirit of determined resistance to slavery aggressions at the North.

On the 6th of November last the conspirators saw that their hour had come. The sceptre of power was about to pass from their hands. But for six months more they would be in possession of the Administration—with a pliant tool at the head of it (whether more an imbecile or more a traitor, history will decide)—with accomplices in the Treasury, War, and Navy departments: *Cobb* robbing the treasury of millions, disposing the public moneys for the convenient grasp of the conspirators, and planning to reduce the Government to bankruptcy; *Floyd* sending South all the national arms and munitions of war, and putting all the Southern forts, arsenals, and public property in the best condition for them to seize; with *Toucey* keeping our navy at the ends of the world, and doing nothing, and urging nothing to be done, in his department which, with his

knowledge, he knew the defence of the country required to be done and urged.

Then came secession, and secession—in some cases preceded, in others followed, by the seizure of forts, and arsenals, and custom-houses, public moneys, and vessels—until seven States had been declared out of the Union; the *Star of the West*, with national troops on board, fired into, and the flag of the Union insulted; the Administration looking on with traitorous or helpless inaction—while the rebel insurgents and their traitorous sympathizers in every quarter were filling the land and confusing the public mind with the impudent cry of “no coercion!” If observation and history had not taught us how prodigious often is the delusive force of the perpetual reiteration of phrases and watchwords over unreflecting minds, one would stand amazed at the effrontery that could utter, and the stupidity that could be deluded by, any thing so unspeakably absurd as this cry of “no coercion” raised in behalf of those who were engaged in such acts of theft, robbery, treason, and war against the nation. The highwayman’s protest against any outcry of alarm from you when he is clutching your throat, or the burglar’s protest against any defensive violence on your part when he is breaking into your house, are incomparably less impudent and more entitled to respect.

Such was the state of the country when President Lincoln came into power. Whether or not it was any part of the conspiracy that he should be assassinated, at any time before or after his advent, may never perhaps be known. There are those who believe it was.

But he came into office: with an army and navy weakened by the desertion of many of the officers, and not well knowing who and how many of those that remained were to be trusted; with traitors in every department of the public service—in every bureau, every room, and almost at every desk; without arms; with an empty treasury; with the Border States urging “compromise” and threatening secession, backed by numerous journals and multitudes of men at the North openly proclaiming secession sympathies, and demanding compromising concessions; the great body of the people hardly yet able to understand and believe what a crisis had come, and leaving it doubtful whether the Government would find a united North to support it in a vigorous repression of the conspiracy, even if the means of doing so were in its hands; and all this time the insurgents, with defiant boldness, pushing on their preparations for war—erecting batteries, pointing cannon, gathering and drilling troops, getting down from the North all the arms and ammunition they could find mercenary traitors willing to supply them with; yet still shouting the cry of “no coercion”—a cry still joined in by the Border States and still echoed by many a Northern voice!

Thus stood things until the *thirteenth of April*, when Fort Sumter fell, and on both sides the war began.

I need not recite what has followed since. It is all fresh in your minds:—the call of the President—the uprising of the nation—the three hundred thousand men on foot, all volunteers—the meeting of Congress—the five hundred thousand men and the five hundred mil-

lions of dollars voted for the defence of the Union. You know it all—what successes have crowned our arms; and what reverses we have sustained, enough to sadden, but not enough to cast us down—not enough to make us bate one jot of heart or hope of the final triumph of the righteous cause. No. No. Had the rout of the Union forces at Manassas been ten times more terrible than that of the Romans at Cannae, the spirit of the nation would, I am sure, rise to an equal height of heroic resolution.

A Civil War is a great calamity; but great as it is, it is not the greatest calamity that can befall a nation. Moral degeneracy, corruption, and rottenness are worse; and a civil war, notwithstanding its inevitable miseries, and the moral evils inevitably incident to it, may, under God's Providence, be sometimes the only effectual means to preserve a nation from the dissolution and downfall which come ever in the sequel of a certain stage of moral corruption and decay.

I presume not to penetrate the counsels of the Most High in this war. But I see it has already wrought a great deliverance for us, worth more than all the treasure and blood it has yet cost or is likely to cost. "The whole life of this nation turns on the problem of converting four and sixpence to a dollar," said Albert Gallatin thirty years ago.* This was too true then, and it has been a great deal more true since then. But it is not true to-day. The cannonade of Fort Sumter evoked a nobler spirit, and substituted a higher problem. How

* "Shall I not be avenged on such a people as this? Saith the Lord," was old John Quincy Adams's remark in reply.

electrical its effect! It broke the suffocating spell of cotton and politics—the lust of gold and the greed of office. It emancipated the mind of the North from the thralldom to mere material interests, and lifted it up into the higher region of ideas, of invisible principles. It united the hearts of twenty millions of people as the heart of one man—made them see and feel that there is something greater than gold, more essential to a nation's life than trade, more sacred than the Gospel of Cotton,—that the Flag of the Union is a symbol of spiritual interests grander, nobler, more inspiring than the interests of commerce and of parties—the great ideas of nationality, government, law, and loyalty; and for that Flag and for the ideas it represents made them ready to pour out all their treasure and to shed all their blood. Whatever be the end of the war, it is a great thing that it has thus united the hearts and exalted the spirit of twenty millions of people. History shows nothing grander than this outburst of loyal enthusiasm. I trust in God this wickedest of all traitorous conspiracies is destined to be overwhelmed with defeat and disgrace. I humbly confide in Him to give the victory to the great righteous cause.

But to make this sure, there must needs be on our part something more than a mere outburst of popular enthusiasm. The spirit which the cannonade of Fort Sumter made go like lightning through every loyal heart, must settle into the calm inflexible determination to endure, if need be, any extremity of sacrifice and suffering in the discharge of the great obligations which this crisis imposes on us. Our country is on trial of its patriotism for the first time since 1776. We have had

since then but little to try and nothing to test the depth and strength of the patriotic spirit.—The day of trial has come. The events of the last six months have rudely dispelled all old illusions, and brought us face to face with the fact that our institutions must, under God, find their security in ourselves, not we ours in them. The question now is not about our institutions sustaining us, but about our ability to defend them: and this is a question not of physical resources, (for of them there is plenty,) nor of military skill and bravery on the battle-field, (for there is and will be enough of this,) but a question of the moral spirit of the nation—of the firmness and constancy of patriotic principle and purpose in the mind and heart of the nation, based in clear convictions, and a profound sense of the duty which rests upon us of maintaining the supremacy of the National Government and thereby the foundations of all government, all social order, and all true human progress. Do the people see and feel their obligation never to lay down their arms until this *Slaveholders' Rebellion*, with its anarchical doctrine of Secession and the monstrous principle of government put forward by Mr. Stephens, is overwhelmed, crushed, and reduced to unconditional submission? Do they see and feel that all talk of “peace” short of this is of the nature of treason, not only to the country, but to the most sacred interests of the human race? Do they thus see and feel? *And will they continue thus to see and feel*—pledging, like the old fathers, their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor on the issue? I trust so. I think so. *There may be politicians looking out for the future with mean, selfish ambitions.* There may be less of pure

self-denying patriotism among those who have the administration of affairs than there was in the old revolutionary struggle; there may be more of corruption and profligacy in the expenditure of the public moneys; but I think the great heart of the nation is right. The action of Congress is noble, is glorious—nothing in history surpasses it. And the nation—I hope, I trust, I believe—the nation will sustain it to the end. I think the nation will rigidly insist that the Administration shall show itself thoroughly in earnest in the prosecution of the war. No Administration can stand that incurs the settled distrust of the people on this point. I think there is a profound determination on the part of the great body of the nation that the war shall be carried on and finished as soon as possible *on purely military* principles without any ulterior political regards. Crush the rebellion by arms first, and let political adjustments be looked after when that is done. Negotiations with rebels in arms will not be tolerated.

Last winter I thought that if the slaveholding States were deliberately determined to go out of the Union, and would do it peaceably and honestly, and wait until the thing could be legally accomplished, I would be for letting them go. I thought we should in many respects be well rid of them; and that they would learn some salutary lessons from the experiment of setting up for themselves, and after a little be glad to come back and behave better in the Union.

But I am of a different mind now. Events have shown a settled determination on the part of the conspirators to effect a permanent division of the country. I see that the material interests of the nation demand

the preservation of the integrity of the national domain. These Southern States are geographically and politically necessary to us as a nation. Those most necessary to round out and complete the national area are ours by every claim. We have bought them, and paid for them, and fought for them, and bled for them. What with purchase money paid—what with fortifications and defences built—what with driving the natives out and the war waged with Mexico, they have cost us millions of treasure and thousands of lives. If the “right of secession” for any of the original thirteen members of the Union be (as it is) an absurd claim, it is for these newer States too monstrously absurd to deserve a moment’s regard. They belong to us by every title. They are ours of right—ours as a necessary possession—and we must keep them. It would never do to have an independent slave empire on our Southern frontier in possession of the Mexican gulf and of the outlet of the great rivers of the West. It would be a perpetual source of irritation, conflict, and war. The two great conflicting systems of social order could never live peaceably side by side. And even if they could, the cause of Christian civilization, and the great interests of human progress, forbid us ever to consent to the dismemberment of the national domain in order to establish a great empire based upon the contradiction of the Declaration of Independence.

We have, it seems to me, no election. The rebellion must be crushed. Nothing short of this will do.

And as to the fate of slavery in the sequel of the war—we must leave it to the future. Opposed as I am in my inmost soul to slavery, and delighted as I

should be to see the Constitution purged of every recognition and guaranty to it and brought back to perfect harmony with the doctrine of the Declaration of Independence, and believing, as I do, that this will some day be done; rejoiced as I should be at the entire extinction of slavery throughout the land, and confident as I am that it will some day be accomplished, I have never been willing to incur the responsibility of advocating the immediate emancipation of the slaves in mass—especially in the lower States, where the slave population is so dense. I have indeed been in the habit heretofore of thinking, and on more than one public occasion have declared the conviction, that immediate emancipation would be no mercy to the slaves and a great curse to the country. But I confess to a less decided opinion now. I do not know that the slaves would be any better off at first. But I have less apprehension of results disastrous to social order and security than I formerly entertained. Manumission worked peacefully in St. Domingo for seven years; and it was not until the attempt made by Napoleon after that time to reduce the blacks again to slavery, that those scenes of bloody horror were enacted which have been so often held up to alarm and to warn. Emancipation worked peacefully in the British West India islands. It might work so here. Still the future of slavery in this country is to me a problem dark and difficult of solution. *But time makes many dark things clear*—and often in a wonderfully short and decisive way. I am more and more every year impressed with this truth.

The theory on which our Government is carrying on this war insures the constitutional rights of all slave.

holders who are loyal to the Union. But what claim to such protection have rebels in arms to overthrow the Constitution? Is it due in justice? or in sound policy? In neither, as I think. I am of opinion that the time may come when not only sound policy, but the stern necessities of war—in the military occupation of the Border States—will compel the proclamation of freedom to the slaves of rebel and traitor masters. This will be putting the axe to the root of the tree. It will hasten the extinction of slavery in those States—a consummation sure indeed to come at no distant day from the operation of other causes economical and social. What in the sequel will come in the Lower States, God only can foresee;—what *may* come, it makes one shudder to forecast, unless the power of the Union be interposed to protect the lives of those who are seeking to destroy the Union. On the whole, I am inclined to think that the end of this war will in some way be the end, or the beginning of the end, of slavery. But whether so or not, I am sure that the Most High, whose Providence is the genius of human history, will in some wise way dispose of this, as of every other great question, according to His plans in the conduct of human affairs.

Meantime let us be true to our God and to our country, true to the great cause of justice and of human rights. Let us not be cast down by the reverses we have sustained. Let us rather profit by our disasters. We have been too proud and boastful in our confidence. It may do us a great deal of good to learn at the outset of the war the lessons our reverses should teach. Let us learn them; and let us be roused to a firmer courage to maintain the great cause amidst all

sacrifices and all sufferings. Our fathers fought for seven years to establish the Declaration of Independence; and shame to us if we are not willing to fight, if need be, for seven times seven years to prevent its overthrow. They were three millions all told; we are twenty. They were poor; we are rich. They fought against fearful odds; we have the odds on our side.

We fight for more than they fought for. If we are true to our duty, our triumph is sure. If we fail, it will be because we are basely recreant; and we shall incur, as we shall deserve, the scorn and execration of all noble spirits as long as the ages roll. Shall we then succumb? No, never—I trust in God, never.

We have appealed to the God of Battles. The appeal has been forced upon us. After a forbearance unparalleled in history, we have accepted the issue so wickedly forced upon us. In the face of the world, in the sight of the universe, we have made our appeal to the God of Battles; and we must never withdraw that appeal as long as He gives us a pulse to feel, or an arm to strike for the sacred cause of truth and right. We fight not for ourselves alone, not for this generation alone, but for our posterity, for unborn ages, for every thing dear and sacred in the great future of our country and of the human race. Let us then maintain the conflict until the “Star-Spangled Banner” shall again float over the land from Maine to Texas, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific—and with the exalted trust that it will to the end of time float over a country one and indivisible, a country that shall forever be

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